

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----022252 221906Z /41

P R 221846Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9635
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION USBERLIN
USMISSION USNATO
AMCONSUL BREMEN
AMCONSUL FRANKFURT
AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF
AMCONSUL HAMBURG
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMCONSUL STUTTGART
AMEMBASSY BERLIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 11546

EXDIS

DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS WHITE HOUSE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PINR, PGOV, OVIP, GW
SUBJECT: HELMUT KOHL'S VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES

REF: BONN 10272, JUNE 20, 1977

1. SINCE THE JUNE 4 ELECTIONS IN HAMBURG AND LOWER
SAXONY, THE VISIT OF HELMUT KOHL TO THE UNITED STATES
DURING THE NEXT TWO WEEKS HAS ASSUMED ADDITIONAL SIGNI-
FICANCE. KOHL DEEPLY APPRECIATES THE EXTENT OF THE
PROGRAM AND PARTICULARLY THE OPPORTUNITY THAT HE WILL
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HAVE TO MEET WITH THE PRESIDENT.

2. KOHL'S VISIT HAD ORIGINALLY BEEN CONCEIVED MONTHS
AGO DURING A TIME OF CONSIDERABLE PUBLIC DISCUSSION
ABOUT US-GERMAN DIFFERENCES. HE DECIDED TO VISIT THE
UNITED STATES IN ORDER TO UNDERLINE HIS OWN STRONG PER-
SONAL BELIEF IN THE NECESSITY FOR GOOD US-FRG RELA-

TIONS, AND ALSO TO UNDERLINE THE WARMTH OF HIS FEELING TOWARD THE UNITED STATES. THE PURPOSE OF HIS VISIT REMAINS UNCHANGED BUT ITS SIGNIFICANCE HAS BEEN ALTERED BY RECENT GERMAN POLITICAL EVENTS THAT HAVE BOOSTED THE OPPOSITION'S CHANCES OF COMING TO POWER IN 1980 AND POSSIBLY BEFORE THEN. THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR WILL BE THE OUTCOME OF THE OCTOBER 8 ELECTIONS IN HESSE, ESPECIALLY THE FATE OF THE FDP AND THE DEGREE TO WHICH A SHIFT IN THE MAJORITY OF THE GERMAN UPPER HOUSE COULD STALEMATE THE SCHMIDT GOVERNMENT'S CAPACITY TO LEGISLATE.

3. NONE OF THIS WOULD STRIKE KOHL AS PARTICULARLY STARTLING. EVER SINCE THE 1976 ELECTIONS, HE HAS ASSERTED WITH SUBLIME CONFIDENCE THAT IT WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE SPD-FPD COALITION TO GOVERN GERMANY FOR FOUR YEARS AGAINST THE PARTY WITH THE PLURALITY IN THE BUNDESTAG. HOWEVER, IT HAS CERTAINLY CHANGED THE VIEWS THAT OTHERS HOLD ABOUT KOHL AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH HE MUST NOW BE SEEN.

4. KOHL'S STAFF AND FRIENDS HAVE TOLD US THAT HE STILL WISHES TO USE HIS WASHINGTON AND NEW YORK VISITS LARGELY TO MEET PEOPLE, TO GAIN IMPRESSIONS, TO LEARN AND -- MOST OF ALL -- TO SHOW HIS COMMITMENT TO THE TRANS-ATLANTIC RELATIONSHIP. HE WILL PROBABLY NOT CONFIDENTIAL

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WANT TO DEAL IN DETAIL WITH COMPLEX INTERNATIONAL ECONOMII AND DEFENSE ISSUES. HE MAY WISH TO SPEAK MORE ON EAST-WEST ISSUES, WHERE HE SUPPORTS DETENTE ALTHOUGH ON DIFFERENT TERMS THAN THOSE FAVORED BY CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT.

5. OBVIOUSLY, HE WOULD BE MORE PREPARED TO DISCUSS BROADER QUESTIONS ON THE GENERAL DIRECTION OF GERMAN POLICY, A POLICY HE SEES AS INEXTRICABLY LINKED TO THE WEST AND TO THE UNITED STATES.

6. MAINLY, HOWEVER, AS INDICATED ABOVE, KOHL'S PEOPLE TELL US THAT HE WISHES TO USE THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET PEOPLE AND TO DISCUSS SOME OF THE PROBLEMS THAT HE MAY NEED TO FACE IF AND WHEN HE DOES BECOME CHANCELLOR.

7. ALTHOUGH THE BASIC BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SUBMITTED REFTTEL REMAINS VALID, THERE HAVE BEEN SOME CHANGES IN KOHL DURING THE YEAR AND A HALF HE HAS FUNCTIONED AS THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION IN BONN. HE REMAINS CHEERFUL, FRIENDLY, ALMOST JOVIAL IN MANY CONTACTS. HOWEVER, THOSE WHO HAVE SEEN HIM BEFORE AND AFTER NOTICE THAT HE

HAS BECOME TOUGHER AND THAT THE EXPERIENCE OF MANAGING

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ACTION SS-25

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-----022256 221912Z /41

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9636
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AMCONSUL FRANKFURT
AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF
AMCONSUL HAMBURG
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMCONSUL STUTTGART
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BONN 11546

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THE OPPOSITION AGAINST A TOUGH CHANCELLOR HAS MADE HIM
AT THE SAME TIME MORE CAUTION AND MORE CONFIDENT.

8. KOHL REMAINS A MAN WITH AN EXCELLENT POLITICAL MIND
BUT WITHOUT THE GIFT FOR COMPLEX ARTICULATION.

HE TENDS STILL TO SPEAK IN GENERAL TERMS
AND ON THE BASIS OF BROAD PRINCIPLES, BUT HIS POLITICAL
PERCEPTIONS HAVE CLEARLY MATURED.

9. KOHL IS STILL NOT IN OFFICE. THEREFORE, HE DOES NOT
HAVE THE STAFF OR THE EXPERIENCE THAT PREPARES HIM TO
DEAL IN DETAIL WITH SOME OF THE COMPLICATED QUESTIONS
WHICH SENIOR OFFICIALS FACE EVERY DAY. HE REMAINS A
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CANDIDATE, MEANING THAT HE CONCENTRATES HIS ATTENTION ON THE COMPLEXITIES OF POLITICAL MANEUVERS RATHER THAN ON THE DAY BY DAY BUSINESS OF GOVERNMENT. THIS, COMBINED WITH THE FACT THAT HE DOES NOT YET HAVE GOVERNMENT EXPERIENCE AND AUTHORITY, EXPLAINS HIS RELUCTANCE DURING CONVERSATION TO DEAL IN DETAIL WITH THE DIFFICULT ISSUES FACING HEADS OF STATE AND HEADS OF GOVERNMENT. IT DOES NOT, HOWEVER, DIMINISH HIS CONFIDENCE IN HIS ABILITY TO DEAL WITH THEM IF AND WHEN THE TIME COMES.

10. AS A POLITICAL OPERATOR, KOHL HAS PROVEN MORE ASTUTE THAN MANY EXPECTED. HE HAS BEEN ABLE TO BEAT OFF SEVERAL CHALLENGES FROM FRANZ JOSEF STRAUSS. MOREOVER, HE HAS A HIGHER STANDING AND BROADER SUPPORT WITHIN THE CDU AT THIS POINT THAN HE HAD TWO YEARS AGO. IT IS ON THIS BASIS, AND ON THE EXPECTATION THAT HE MAY INDEED BE CHANCELLOR, THAT HE FACES HIS WASHINGTON VISIT. STOESEL

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